

January 1998

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Last fall, I sent you two newsletters asking for your opinions on various issues. Your responses, calls and letters were a great help as I planned and prepared for session. This newsletter gives you a summary of my 1998 session work plan, and includes a rundown on the results of the surveys. Thanks to all of you who took time to respond.

This year's session is short - just 60 days - and began January 12. As always, I'm counting on you to write, call or e-mail me with your thoughts or concerns.

Sincerely

Karen Keiser

State Representative

How you can reach me

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Committees

Appropriations; Financial Institutions & Insurance; Education, assistant ranking minority member



Working for working families and seniors



Improving student performance and parental involvement in schools

I heard from many parents who share my concern with low student performance in the classroom. More than 75 percent of the citizens responding to my survey said they liked my idea to offer a "best practices" guide for math teaching to all of our state's elementary schools. This is in direct response to the alarmingly poor test scores of fourth-grade students - less than 25 percent of our students met the new higher academic standards! I have been meeting with local teachers, principals and education leaders to find out who's successful in teaching math to come up with a solid foundation for our schools. As the assistant ranking minority member of the House Education Committee, I will be introducing a bill this Session to accomplish this.

I also heard from many parents who say they want to get more involved in their child's education. A total of 64 percent of the respondents said they would support an expansion of the current Family Leave law to enable working parents to have eight hours of leave to attend significant school meetings. Under my proposal, schools would also have to consider the possibility of hosting Saturday morning conferences to accommodate working families. So far the response has been positive from both teachers and parents!



Looking out for consumers

Many homeowners must pay private mortgage insurance when they have less than 20 percent down payment on their home. The problem is, many homeowners continue to pay this fee when they've surpassed 20 percent equity in their home. This means many homeowners are essentially giving a bonus to banks and mortgage lenders when they could be using this money to save for their children's college education or just buy groceries. As a member of the Financial Institutions and Insurance Committee, I will be introducing a bill this Session that requires lenders to notify homeowners when they've reached the 20 percent requirement.



Helping residents affected by Sea-Tac Airport

I have spent countless hours dealing with the current environmental impacts from SeaTac Airport . The Port of Seattle has had more than 20 violations related to pollution of our environment in the last five years. The state has fined the port \$27,000 for such violations just in the last two years. This money then goes into the state general fund rather than to the communities damaged by the operations. This law needs to be changed so the communities damaged by the airport get the money. I am co-sponsoring a bill with Sen. Julia Patterson to ensure that the cities of Burien, Des Moines, Normandy Park and SeaTac get that money.

Many homeowners are already seeing a reduction in their property values due to operations at SeaTac . I think it is wrong to force residents affected by the airport to pay any property taxes to the Port of Seattle. This Session I am also co-sponsoring a bill with Sen. Patterson that would exempt homeowners in a 55 LDN noise level from paying property taxes to the Port of Seattle. This would include most of Des Moines, large portions of Burien, Normandy Park, SeaTac and Tukwila. Citizens around the airport pay with their property values, their lungs, their ears and their quality of life every single day. They shouldn't have to pay with their pocketbooks.

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Working families and seniors need a break. Even amid our current economic boom, wages remain stagnant, and property taxes continue to increase. I'd like to help working families and seniors stay afloat.

I will be introducing a bill this Session which rewards businesses providing family-wage jobs with benefits by dramatically cutting their Business and Occupation (B&O) taxes. And to ensure our seniors do not get taxed out of their homes, I will also introduce a bill this Session that increases the threshold for senior citizen property-tax exemptions to \$35,000 annual income. The current threshold is set at \$28,000 of annual income per household. We need to protect the life-long investments of our seniors who have paid a lifetime of taxes.

What you had to say

I was thrilled that so many citizens took the time to answer my recent surveys on the upcoming '98 Session. These surveys focused on finding out what citizens think the top issues should be for the Legislature and what lawmakers should do with the \$861 million budget surplus. I believe the survey results send two clear messages. First, citizens want to invest in their schools and improve student performance in the classroom. Equally important, however, taxpayers say the economic boom should mean taxpayers get a break!

Many of you included letters and additional ideas about the survey which is incredibly helpful when shaping my agenda for 33rd District residents. I have included some graphs to to better visualize the feedback I received from citizens. Here's what you had to say......

Survey No. 1 Session issue survey

A total of 480 people responded to this survey:

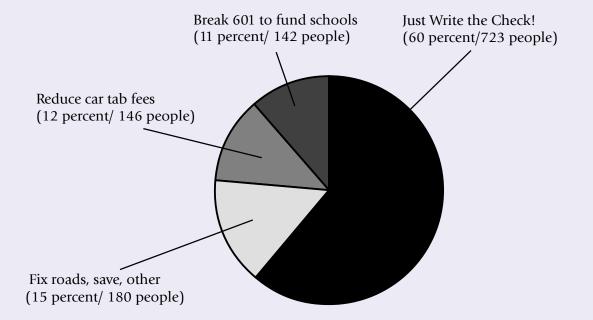
Should the state adopt a best math practices guide? 77 percent said yes (372) 15 percent said no (72)	Should the state adopt stiffer penalties for road rage crimes? 65 percent said yes (314) 27 percent said no (130)
Should the state invest in education excellence?	
63 percent said yes (301) 30 percent said no (143)	Should the state use the interlock device to help get drunk drivers off the road? 46 percent said yes (220)
Should the state fund all-day kindergarten?	44 percent said no (212)
53 percent said yes (258)	
37 percent said no (177)	Should the state reduce car tab fees? 67 percent said yes (323)
Should the state expand the Family Leave act to encourage parental involvement in schools?	26 percent said no (125)
64 percent said yes (307)	Should the state reduce the B&O taxes for businesses
21 percent said no (99)	providing a family-wage job? 61 percent said yes (294)
Should the state provide more funding for pedestrian safety improvements?	28 percent said no (137)
61 percent said yes (291)	Should the state reduce senior citizen property taxes?
33 percent said no (160)	58 percent said yes (281)

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Second survey on budget surplus

There were a total of 1,191 surveys returned.





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